

Natural Communities of Louisiana



Coastal Mangrove-Marsh Shrubland

Rarity Rank: S3/G2?

	1	2	3	4	5
State					
Global					
	imperiled		rare		secure

Synonyms: Intertidal Saltwater Swamp, Saltwater Swamp, Mangrove Swamp

Ecological Systems: CES203.471 Mississippi Delta Salt and Brackish Tidal Marsh

General Description:

- Estuarine community generally found adjacent to or surrounded by salt marsh, and often on the leeward side of barrier islands
- Although sometimes termed a swamp, the outward appearance of the community in Louisiana more closely resembles a shrub thicket
- Restricted to Louisiana's outer coastal region due to black mangrove's inability to tolerate freezing temperatures
- Top-kill caused by winter freezes limits mangroves to a shrub-like form (10 feet or less in height), unlike Florida where they attain forest stature
- Extensive root systems stabilize the shoreline and reduce erosion
- Cover and food provided by mangrove shrublands create an excellent nursery area for fish and shellfish
- The presence of mangrove thickets within the salt marsh improves surrounding water quality by filtering nutrients and suspended sediments
- Serves as important nesting areas for colonial waterbirds

Plant Community Associates

Common species include:

Avicennia germinans (black mangrove)
Spartina alterniflora (smooth cordgrass)
Batis maritima (saltwort)
Salicornia virginica (creeping glasswort)
Iva frutescens (marshelder)
Borrichia frutescens (sea ox-eye)
Distichlis spicata (salt grass)

Federally-listed plant & animal species:

Pelecanus occidentalis (brown pelican)
Endangered (PS:E); G4; S2



Black mangrove seedling



Avicennia germinans in flower

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Range:

Mangroves in Louisiana are found along the fringes of the Deltaic Plain coastal marshes, most commonly flanking large bays and on the leeward side of barrier islands. It is estimated that in the late 1970's a total of 3,900 to 5,900 acres of mangroves occurred in Louisiana. Occasional hard freezes can seriously reduce the extent of this community in coastal Louisiana. However, mild winters of the past decade have allowed expansion of this natural community in southeastern Louisiana's coastal marshes.

LA River Basins:

Pontchartrain, Barataria, Terrebonne



Threats:

- Shoreline erosion
- Construction of roads, pipelines or utilities
- Hydrological alterations (to include adjacent areas)
- Contamination by chemicals or industrial discharge
- Invasive exotic species

Beneficial Management Practices:

- Prevent conversion of existing natural community to other land uses
- Shoreline or island stabilization
- Remove any invasive exotic plant species with use of spot herbicides or mechanical means



Mangrove invading salt marsh near Port Fourchon



Brown pelicans nesting in mangroves



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For more information, please visit our Web pages at

www.wlf.louisiana.gov/experience/naturalheritage or 225-765-2811

www.BTNEP.org or 1-800-259-0869